

NOTICE OF MOTION – CLLR M WHITEHAND – WOMEN’S SAFETY IN PUBLIC PLACES

Executive Summary

At its meeting on 2 December 2021, the Council referred the following Notice of Motion to the Executive.

Councillor M Whitehand

“The Council will bring forward policies that ensure women feel safe when out and about in Woking’s public places. One of which should be the designation of women only parking places in its car parks during the hours of darkness, especially those sited near staircases and entrances. Women’s safety should feature greatly in its community safety programme and every endeavour be given in establishing what areas can be reviewed that would deliver such assurance.”

Officer Comment

“In light of the national concern raised over safety for women and girls, there is a plan for a Surrey Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy in line with the national one. To develop this, and the associated action plan, a new Surrey wide partnership group, Violence Against Women and Girls Executive Meeting, will hold its first meeting in December. This will be co-chaired by Assistant Chief Constable Fiona Macpherson from Surrey Police and a Director from Surrey County Council. We will be supporting this strategy and developing our own local action plan. Surrey Police has already written their strategy so work has already begun. We are expecting that a key priority will be to make Surrey a place where the public, and in particular women and girls, can feel safe by ensuring we provide “Safer Spaces”.

Woking Borough Council has already done some work to assist this in that our car parks have been awarded the Park Mark. The Park Mark Safer Parking Scheme is a Police Crime Prevention Initiative that is aimed at reducing both crime and the fear of crime in parking facilities. The Safer Parking Scheme is a national standard for UK car parks that have low crime and measures in place to ensure the safety of people and vehicles. A Park Mark is awarded to each car park that achieves the challenging standards and helps drivers find car parks where they can confidently leave their vehicle, knowing the environment is safer. We will explore the possibility of other measures which will enhance women, and vulnerable users, feelings of safety in our car parks.

In addition, Surrey Police has been successful recently in a bid nationally for the Safer Streets 3 funding where nearly £175,000 has been awarded to make improvements along the canal. This is a partnership project with Woking Borough Council, the Basingstoke Canal Authority and volunteers from Basingstoke Canal Society and Canal Watch. The funding includes removal of graffiti, installation of CCTV, vegetation clearance, signage and a communications campaign aimed at safety messages. Some of the main aims of this fund are to reduce violence against women and girls (VAWG), increase women and girls’ feelings of safety in public spaces and make public spaces safer for all.”

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Background Papers: None.

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